

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A remote station for tracking valuation of at least one of a group of products
5 and a group of services, wherein each one of each group bears a code that
uniquely identifies each one in the group, wherein the remote station may be
communicatively coupled to at least one user station and comprises:
 - a database resident at the remote station, wherein the database stores
ones of the uniquely identifying codes that have been previously received from
10 one or more user stations;
 - a database server, coupled to the database, that compares each new
candidate code received from a given user station against the previously
received codes stored in the database;
 - wherein the database server credits an account of a user associated with
15 the given user station with a non-zero valuation credit only if such new
candidate code received from the given user station was not previously stored
in the database; and
 - wherein the database server stores such new candidate code in the
database as a previously received code if such new candidate code was not
20 previously stored in the database.

2. The remote station of claim 1, wherein said database further includes at least one permissible new candidate code, and wherein the at least one permissible new candidate code may be provided by a provider of the ones in the group, and wherein said database server compares each new candidate code against the at least one permissible new candidate code.

3. The remote station of claim 2, wherein the non-zero valuation credit may be not credited if the new candidate code doesn't match one of the at least one permissible new candidate codes.

4. The remote station of claim 3, wherein there are at least two groups, and wherein each group may be provided by a different provider.

5. The remote station of claim 4, wherein said database server maintains separate previously received codes and separate permissible new candidate codes for each provider.

6. The remote station of claim 1, wherein said database may be resident on a network server at the remote station.

7. The remote station of claim 6, wherein the communicative coupling may be an internet connection.

8. The remote station of claim 1, wherein said database server includes one account associated with each user to correspond to one group for the crediting of the non-zero valuation credit.

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9. The remote station of claim 1, wherein there are at least two groups, and wherein each group may be provided by a different provider.

10. The remote station of claim 9, wherein said database server maintains separate previously received codes for each provider.

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11. The remote station of claim 1, wherein said database server, upon storing a previously received code, further stores the previously received code as a consumed code.

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12. The remote station of claim 11, wherein the consumed code cannot be entered as a previously received code by a subsequent user.

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13. The remote station of claim 1, wherein the uniquely identifying code may be a UPC.

14. The remote station of claim 1, wherein the uniquely identifying code may be a SPIF.

5 15. The remote station of claim 1, wherein the uniquely identifying code may be numeric.

16. The remote station of claim 1, wherein the uniquely identifying code may be alphabetic.

10 17. The remote station of claim 1, wherein the uniquely identifying code may be alpha-numeric.

18. The remote station of claim 1, wherein the new candidate code may be placed under a peel off label.

15 19. The remote station of claim 1, wherein the new candidate code may be read by a code reader at the user station.

20 20. The remote station of claim 19, wherein said code reader may be a bar code reader.

21. The remote station of claim 1, wherein the new candidate code may be typed into the user station by the user.

5 22. The remote station of claim 21, wherein the new candidate code may be typed into an internet browser interface at the user station by the user.

23. The remote station of claim 1, wherein a web browser may be resident on the remote station and the user station.

10 24. The remote station of claim 1, wherein a credit certificate may be issued to the user account once a pre set value of non-zero valuation credits may be accumulated in the user account.

15 25. A remote station for tracking a group of promotional certificates, each of which bears a code that uniquely identifies each certificate in the group, wherein the remote station may be communicatively coupled to at least one user station and comprises:

20 a database resident at the remote station, wherein the database stores ones of the uniquely identifying codes that have been previously received from one or more user stations;

a database server, coupled to the database, that compares each new candidate code received from a given user station against the previously received codes stored in the database;

5 wherein the database server credits an account of a user associated with the given user station with a non-zero certificate credit only if such new candidate code received from the given user station was not previously stored in the database; and

10 wherein the database server stores such new candidate code in the database as a previously received code if such new candidate code was not previously stored in the database.

26. The remote station of claim 25, wherein the user may be a retailer.

15 27. The remote station of claim 26, wherein the account credited may be a retailer's account, and wherein the non-zero certificate credit may be equivalent to a purchase value for the certificate.

20 28. The remote station of claim 25, wherein said database further includes at least one permissible new candidate code, and wherein the at least one permissible new candidate code may be provided by a provider of the certificates in the group, and wherein said database server compares each new candidate code against the at least one permissible new candidate code.

29. The remote station of claim 28, wherein the non-zero gift certificate credit may be not credited if the new candidate code doesn't match one of the at least one permissible new candidate codes.

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30. The remote station of claim 29, wherein there are at least two groups of certificates, and wherein each group may be provided by a different provider.

31. The remote station of claim 30, wherein said database server maintains separate previously received codes and separate permissible new candidate codes for each provider.

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32. The remote station of claim 25, wherein said database may be resident on a network server at the remote station.

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33. The remote station of claim 32, wherein the communicative coupling may be an internet connection.

34. The remote station of claim 25, wherein said database server, upon storing a previously received code, further stores the previously received code as a consumed code.

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35. The remote station of claim 34, wherein the consumed code cannot be entered as a previously received code by a subsequent user.
- 5 36. The remote station of claim 25, wherein the gift certificate code may be numeric.
37. The remote station of claim 25, wherein the gift certificate code may be alphabetic.
- 10 38. The remote station of claim 25, wherein the gift certificate code may be alpha-numeric.
39. The remote station of claim 25, wherein the new candidate code may be read by a code reader at the user station.
- 15 40. The remote station of claim 39, wherein said code reader may be a bar code reader
41. The remote station of claim 25, wherein the new candidate code may be
- 20 typed into the user station by the user.

42. The remote station of claim 41, wherein the new candidate code may be typed into an internet browser interface at the user station by the user.

43. The remote station of claim 25, wherein a web browser may be resident on the remote station and the user station.

44. A method for tracking promotion of at least one group of products each of which bears a code that uniquely identifies each product in the group, comprising:

communicatively coupling a remote station to a user station;

providing a database at the remote station;

storing in the database ones of the uniquely identifying codes that have been previously received from one or more user stations;

comparing each new candidate code received from a given user station against the previously received codes stored in the database;

crediting an account of a user associated with the given user station with a non-zero promotional credit only if such new candidate code received from the given user station was not previously stored in the database; and

storing such new candidate code in the database as a previously received code if such new candidate code was not previously stored in the database.

46. The method of claim 45, further comprising receiving at the remote station from the user station the new candidate code prior to said comparing.

5 47. The method of claim 45, further comprising storing the previously received code as a consumed code.

48. The method of claim 47, further comprising preventing entry of the consumed code as a previously received code by a subsequent user.

10 49. The method of claim 45, further comprising:

storing at least one permissible new candidate code provided by a provider of the products in the group; and

comparing each new candidate code against the at least one permissible new candidate code.

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50. The method of claim 49, further comprising preventing said crediting of the non-zero promotional credit if the new candidate code doesn't match one of the at least one permissible new candidate codes.

20 51. A method for tracking a group of gift certificates each of which bears a code that uniquely identifies each gift certificate in the group, comprising:
communicatively coupling a remote station to a user station;

providing a database at the remote station;

storing in the database ones of the gift certificate codes that have been previously received from one or more user stations;

5 comparing each new candidate code received from a given user station against the previously received codes stored in the database;

crediting an account of a user associated with the given user station with a non-zero gift certificate credit only if such new candidate code received from the given user station was not previously stored in the database; and

10 storing such new candidate code in the database as a previously received code if such new candidate code was not previously stored in the database.

52. The method of claim 51, wherein the user may be a retailer.

15 53. The method of claim 52, further comprising exchanging, by the retailer, of at least one product of value equivalent to the gift certificate for the gift certificate, prior to said comparing.

20 54. The method of claim 53, wherein said crediting may be to a retailer's account, and wherein the non-zero gift certificate credit may be equivalent to a purchase value for the gift certificate.

55. The method of claim 51, further comprising receiving at the remote station from the user station the new candidate code prior to said comparing.

5 56. The method of claim 51, further comprising storing the previously received code as a consumed code.

57. The method of claim 56, further comprising preventing entry of the consumed code as a previously received code by a subsequent user.

10 58. The method of claim 51, further comprising:

storing at least one permissible new candidate code provided by a provider of the gift certificates in the group; and

comparing each new candidate code against the at least one permissible new candidate code.

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59. The method of claim 58, further comprising preventing said crediting of the non-zero gift certificate credit if the new candidate code doesn't match one of the at least one permissible new candidate codes.

20 60. A promotional system, comprising:

a user station;

at least one product group, wherein each product in the group bears a unique code; and

a remote station communicatively coupled to said user station, said remote station comprising:

5 a database resident at the remote station, wherein the database stores ones of the uniquely identifying codes that have been previously received from one or more user stations;

 a database server, coupled to the database, that compares each new candidate code received from a given user station against the previously
10 received codes stored in the database;

 wherein the database server credits an account of a user associated with the given user station with a non-zero promotional credit only if such new candidate code received from the given user station was not previously stored in the database; and

15 wherein the database server stores such new candidate code in the database as a previously received code if such new candidate code was not previously stored in the database.

61. A gift certificate system, comprising:

20 at least one user station;

 a group of gift certificates, each of which bears a unique code; and

a remote station that may be communicatively coupled to said least one user station, said remote station comprising:

a database resident at the remote station, wherein the database stores ones of the uniquely identifying codes that have been previously received from one or more user stations;

a database server, coupled to the database, that compares each new candidate code received from a given user station against the previously received codes stored in the database;

wherein the database server credits an account of a user associated with the given user station with a non-zero gift certificate credit only if such new candidate code received from the given user station was not previously stored in the database; and

wherein the database server stores such new candidate code in the database as a previously received code if such new candidate code was not previously stored in the database.

62. A transaction processing and tracking system comprising:

at least one front-end service providing at least one product bearing a code that uniquely identifies said product;

at least one back-end service communicatively coupled to said at least one front-end service; and,

at least one account, associated with a user, including at least one pre-defined purse suitable for use in the transaction, wherein said at least one account is communicatively coupled to said at least one front-end service;

5 wherein said at least one product is transacted in exchange for multiple resource types included in said account by interacting with said account in accordance with an agreed value of said at least one product; and

wherein said at least one product is exchanged for multiple ones of the multiple resource types, and accordingly said account is interacted with.

10 63. The system of claim 62, wherein said communicatively coupled comprises a known communications network.

64. The system of claim 63, wherein said known communications network comprises at least one of an Internet, intranet, LAN, WAN, and a wireless
15 communication.

65. The system of claim 62, wherein said at least one front-end service includes at least one of merchants, financial resources, service providers, and business partners.

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66. The system of claim 62, wherein said at least one back-end service includes at least one of a server and software resource and consumer account.

5 67. The system of claim 62, wherein transactions include value based transactions.

68. The system of claim 62, wherein said interacting includes debits.

10 69. The system of claim 62, wherein said interacting includes credits.

70. The system of claim 62, wherein said interacting includes value chaining.